



# Senator Richard Alarcón

## News from the 20th District

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Volume 1

Issue 1

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### Senator Alarcón's Proposed Legislation

#### Health Care Costs Reimbursements

SB 593 would require huge corporations (more than 20,000 employees) whose low-income workers must use Medi-Cal or Healthy Families State Programs, to reimburse the state's taxpayers for its share of the costs to provide health care for the workers and their children.

#### Funding for Trauma Centers

Trauma Care Centers are closing all across the state due to a shortfall of hundreds of millions of dollars. SB 57 will raise approx. \$100 million yearly without raising taxes and while promoting safer driving by adding a \$20-\$30 penalty to fines for dangerous moving violations like DUI.

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### Alarcón's 'Golden Hour' Bill Clears Hurdle

#### *Plan Would Raise \$100 Million a Year for Trauma Centers*

(Sacramento, CA) Senator Richard Alarcón's 'Golden Hour' Bill, which is designed to raise approximately \$100 Million a year for hospital trauma centers, is one step closer to becoming a state law. The bill was passed by the Senate Public Safety Committee recently by a vote of 4-1.

At the hearing, Dr. Paul Kivela, President of the California Chapter of the American College of Emergency Physicians testified that "we have only 60 minutes from the moment of injury to notify the police; dispatch an ambulance to the scene; transport the victim to a hospital; summon the appropriate surgical and support staff; and perform the necessary life-saving surgery."

Senator Alarcón says, "As Californians we are faced with the real possibility that if we ever need quality trauma care in that

Please see 'Golden Hour' on page 2

### Preserving Head Start Services

*By Senator Alarcón*

*I am sure you are as distressed as I am about the recent media stories about the Head Start program in our area. Head Start is an innovative, exemplary program that provides education opportunities for pre-school children from low-income families.*

*In our communities, the Latin American Civic Association (LACA) has operated one of the largest programs in the county for decades under a contract with the Los Angeles County Office of Education. Funding comes from the federal Head Start program. Last year, LACA served over 1,300 students and parents.*

*During the Bush administration, the Head Start program has been nationally challenged for its operational and fiscal problems. In some instances, the challenges have exposed mismanagement and poor use of taxpayer funds.*

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## Senator Alarcón's Proposed Legislation

### Los Angeles County Regional Airport Authority

SB 32 establishes a regional airport authority with the jurisdiction to build a new airport and maintain a comprehensive airport land use plan for the greater LA region. This bill will help ease traffic gridlock and create jobs.

### Workers' Compensation Rate Relief and Regulation

SB 46 is a pro-business bill, intended to insure that the savings achieved from workers' compensation legislative reform are returned to all businesses, large and small, in the form of lower premiums.

### Sunshine Law on Medi-cal Drug Prices

Prescription drug prices are rising and that's causing taxpayers to pay more for healthcare nationwide. Here in California, no one monitors whether taxpayers are getting a good deal from pharmaceutical companies who sell to the state's taxpayer funded Medi-cal program because of a law that exempts them from the Public Records Act. Senator Alarcón's SB 452 will delete that exemption.

## Workers' Compensation Update

### Senator Alarcón Stands up to Insurance Companies

**Senator Richard Alarcón, Chairman of the Senate Labor and Industrial Relations Committee, recently convened the committee to act on several pieces of Workers' Compensation legislation pending before the Senate. Below are excerpts of a story from the Associated Press: (4/14/05)**

(Sacramento) Setting up a potential confrontation with Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, a Senate committee Wednesday approved legislation that would regulate workers' compensation insurance rates and set standards for workers' comp doctor networks. The Labor and Industrial Relations Committee voted 5-3 for a bill by Sen. Richard Alarcón, D-Van Nuys, that would set up a commission comprised of the Governor, Attorney General and Insurance Commissioner, or their designees, to set a range of acceptable workers' comp insurance rates. The measure would also require discounts for employers who had not filed a workers' compensation claim for the previous two years.

Alarcón contends that business owners should have seen bigger drops in their insurance bills and that the main beneficiaries of the workers' comp overhauls have been insurers, whose profits, he said, have jumped as much as 300 percent in the last two years.

"We've got to get control of this rampant profit-taking of these insurance companies," he said.

The committee also approved, again by a 5-3 vote, Kuehl's bill to set

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### ***Golden Hour*** from page 1

golden hour, we simply may not have a place to go for life-saving care." Dr. Kivela adds, "Without an organized, regionalized system of emergency medical care, it is easy to imagine how that Golden Hour could tick away before each element of the trauma scenario could be completed." However, California's system of emergency care is in a crucial situation. As many as 70 California Hospitals with emergency services have closed in the last fifteen years because of funding shortages due largely to the high number of uninsured patients who are being treated in their trauma centers. As a result, patient waiting time and ambulance rerouting to other hospitals have reached dangerous levels.

"We must take action now to save money-starved emergency rooms and trauma centers while the larger debate continues about how to pay for the rising cost of health care in general," says the Senator.

The 'Golden Hour' Bill will not raise taxes. Instead, it allows counties to collect an estimated \$20-\$40 dollar increase on an average \$320 ticket for criminal offenses and dangerous moving violations. Car accidents are among the top 10 causes of trauma injuries. Alarcón adds, "discouraging reckless behavior is a fair way to ease the lack of funding for our hospitals and trauma centers. This bill will help us save lives and promote safer driving without costing the average taxpayers a cent. There are already sufficient safeguards to soften the costs for those who can't pay and can prove economic hardships." SB 57 will now go to the Senate Appropriations Committee for a hearing.



*Medical experts say the  
**Golden Hour**  
is the time in which a  
patient must go from  
**Trauma to Treatment**  
In order to increase their  
chance of survival.*



# Economic Update

## Jobs

More people are working in California in early 2005. January and February showed an average growth of about 18,000 jobs each month. More importantly, we stopped losing jobs due to business closures or moves out of state. The state's unemployment rate was also down to 5.8 percent, from 6.0 percent in December 2004 and 6.4 percent in February 2004.

If you are looking for a job, check with the local EDD office for job openings and job placement help. Pacoima - (818) 890-9400 Van Nuys- (818) 781-2522

## Housing

Real estate continues to be on the rise. Median home price rose more than \$11,000 in January to \$485,700—a new record and 20.1 percent higher than in January 2004. Sales reached a record 659,410 units in January.

## State Revenues

Revenues in February 2005 were \$359 million higher than budgeted. Better information will be available April 30, after the receipt of tax filings on April 15 and the results of the one-time tax amnesty.



California's unemployment rate is dropping.

## Head Start Services from page 1

*In 2004, a federal audit of Head Start found significant problems with both LACA and Los Angeles County. Both were given a year to fix the problems. LACA claims that it has either fixed the problems or is well on its way to solving them. Los Angeles County claims that LACA has failed to fix the problems. The county also claims that a new 2005 audit found additional problems at LACA. As a result, Los Angeles County decided to end the contract with LACA, effective June 30, 2005. LACA has appealed the decision.*

*Irrespective of how or when these problems are resolved, I am extremely concerned about the effects of these problems on our most vulnerable population: pre-school children.*

*Therefore, I have assigned my staff to work with all parties to preserve quality services for the children while the matter is being resolved.*

*I have asked Los Angeles County to provide me with a written, detailed plan on how it proposes to provide services for the 1,300 pre-school children if LACA is defunded, effective June 30, 2005.*

*I will keep you informed about developments regarding this matter. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at 818-901-5588.*

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standards for the medical provider networks that last year's legislation allowed employers to set up to treat workers with job-related injuries. Injured workers are required to see at least three doctors in the network before seeking treatment from an outside physician.

Among other things, Kuehl's bill would require the networks to have at least one treating physician for every 3,600 covered employees and at least one physician who is board-certified in occupational medicine.

## Got College ?

**Event will inform elementary school students and parents about college options and entrance requirements**

Senator Richard Alarcón, sent a letter to the LAUSD Board members and Superintendent Roy Romer recently, supporting LAUSD Board President Jose Huizar's *Resolution on Excellence and Equity in the Reduction of High School Drop-outs/Push-outs*.

*In part, Senator Alarcón's letter reads:* "Los Angeles can no longer afford to have only 40% of its Latino students and 48% of its African American students graduate from high school. Los Angeles is undermining its own economic productivity. The more than 30,000 students that prematurely left LAUSD high schools in 2003, for example, are less likely to get good paying jobs that require high skilled employees. Their loss is also a loss for the greater Los Angeles region."

Huizar's dropout resolution directs the LAUSD and the Superintendent to develop a blueprint to get accurate tracking information on the students who drop out, analyze that information, and develop an education campaign that informs and elicits involvement from parents and community stakeholders. Senator Alarcón says, "LA has the potential to become the most productive city in the nation if we increase our human capital, invest in our students and ensure that they stay in school. Our students also deserve to graduate with real employment choices and the tools to make those choices well. In order to achieve this, we need drop-out prevention, intervention and recovery plans and we must also establish a real dialogue with parents and communities."

With that goal in mind, Senator Alarcón also has a comprehensive plan to improve educational opportunities by making "college-bound" courses available to all students who want them and to write laws that create "educational empowerment zones" where communities can band together to bring educational innovation to areas where the

students most need help. He also plans a series of forums, town hall meetings and events to help inform students and their parents about their higher education options and get students to concentrate on the importance of going to college early in their scholastic careers.



### Got College?

The first event in the series is entitled, Got College? It will be held at Mission College on June 18, 2005. Registration begins at 8am. There will be speakers about the importance of a higher education, a fair of informational booths on careers and educational opportunities, and workshops about financial aid possibilities and college entrance requirements. This is an event every parent will want to attend with their elementary school fifth and sixth graders. **For more information, please call Senator Alarcón's District Office at (818) 901-5588.**

### Got College?

**June 18, 2005**

**Mission College**

#### **Tentative Schedule:**

- 8:00 Registration
- 8:30 Informational Speakers
- 9:30 Workshops
- 11:00 Fair
- Noon Lunch
- 12:30 Fair/Speakers and Entertainment